CHAPTER 8

PARK ENTRANCE

8-1. Application. The park entrance helps the visitor make the transition from the access road to the facilities provided inside the park. Persons arriving at the park for the first time should be able to obtain the information they need to use and enjoy the park, its surroundings, and its facilities. The entrance should control the hours the park is available for use. The park entrance facility should not be confused with nor be developed as a visitor's center, overlook area, or interpretive sign area. The park entrance station is a completely separate park management facility. The area can be used for collection of user fees for the total park, or only portions of the park, such as camping area.

8-2. Controls. Safety of the park user, point of public contact and information and control of the times the park is open for use, are the main controls in the design of park entrances. The entrance station provides safety in that it slows or stops traffic so that the transition from the access road to the park can take place in the mind of the driver of the vehicle entering the park area. The entrance is also an aid for the visitor in that information is available concerning the visitor's destination in the park and how to get there. Because the entrance station can control the hours the park is open to the public, visitor safety and park management are enhanced.

8-3. Design Considerations.

a. Location. Entrances are generally located at the point where the access road enters the park or controlled area, thus providing a single point of control. This single factor is becoming more and more important to park managers concerned with the safety of park visitors, reduction of vandalism, and providing the public with services it needs. In addition the entrance should be located on a site that requires little grading.

b. Park Entrance Area. Access road pavement and shoulder widths at entrances must often be increased for safe maneuvering of vehicles and for possible temporary stopping to read information signs. Space for these manuevers must meet the needs of widely varying types of vehicles (buses, recreation vehicles cars with trailers, and the single family car). Besides the gate with complete fencing, a park entrance sign, flag pole, gate attendant shelter (enclosed or open) parking, water supply, and toilet facilities should be considered in the design of the area. Figure 8-1 shows a typical entrance to a recreation site.

c. Entrance Closures. The fence and gate structure is an important element of park entrance design. This element should be aesthetically pleasing blend in with the environment and be in harmony with the project theme.

d. Signs. Signs at park entrances should be of the highest quality and present a good Corps image. Again, the signs at entrances should blend in with the environment and reflect the project theme.

e. Approach Road. The access road should begin the transition for the visitor from highway speed to the lower speed recreation road inside the entrance. A warning sign with words, "Park Entrance Ahead" should be provided for the entrance. Paragraph 2C-2 of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, ANSI D6.1-1978, should be used as guidance for the design and placement of this and other warning signs. The approach road should meet the stopping sight distance of 450 feet inbound, and 300 feet outbound. Pavement width of 24 feet for the above stopping sight distances and 4 foot shoulders are considered minimum. An additional inbound lane should be considered for important park entrance developments. Other traffic control devices that should be provided are; double yellow line for inbound and outbound zones and posted speed signs. In open range states, cattle guards might be needed. This type of device should be placed well in advance of the station area (500 feet minimum distance from entrance gate area).

Figure 8-1 Typical entrance station to a recreation site